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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 2008

In Today's Papers

TUSIAD Calls for Comprehensive Constitutional Changes
All papers report UN Development Program (UNDP) administrator Kemal Dervis addressed a consultative council meeting of the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) in Istanbul on Thursday. According to Dervis, "Turkey should have a growth rate around seven percent between 2010-2015." He noted Turkey had to allocate 26-28 percent of its national income for investments in order to maintain momentum. Dervis was optimistic about the global financial turbulence, saying history has shown us that past crises have been overcome sooner than anticipated. "Yes, we will witness a slowdown but that will be over soon, and an accelerating growth trend will again kick in for the global economy," Dervis said.

Mustafa Koc, chairman of the high consultative council of TUSIAD, warned in his speech that political polarization was turning into social division. "However, politicians of the same country do not meet each other and seek solutions for problems through dialogue. Can this behavior be justified," Koc asked, stressing "all politicians" were responsible for the political strains in Turkey. Koc said that it was not possible to pave the way for economic and social development without raising Turkey's democratic standards, adjusting the laws to the democratic standards, and making the principle of secular, democratic state of law and individual freedoms the common denominator for all. Koc suggested that politicians, NGOs, academics, and judicial organs should discuss a "comprehensive constitutional amendment." Koc also said critical decisions about the Turkish economy should be shaped in the light of global threats, not of the nearing municipality elections.

Papers report Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB) and labor unions Turk-Is, Hak-Is and DISK have boycotted the TUSIAD meeting. Mainstream Vatan claims the unions decided to boycott the meeting when Prime Minister Erdogan sent them the message that he opposed the TUSIAD initiative involving Kemal Dervis.

Editorial Commentary on Trends in Turkish Politics

"A New Constitution is the Way Out of this Crisis"

Mumtazer Turkone wrote in Islamist leaning Zaman (6/20): "TUSIAD's initiative to convene a constitutional convention could be a good opportunity. Turkey has experienced a deep constitutional crisis since the closure case was filed against the AKP on March 14, 2008. Given the impending economic stagflation, the consequences of this crisis could be fatal. The remedy is simple: The system must be revised, rebuilt and empowered. The current democratic system was rendered ineffective by a judicial coup. Yet, this process was only carried out by the judiciary. The business world now supports democracy. A free and rational democratic climate will serve everyone's interest. A vast consensus is needed for a comprehensive constitutional initiative."

"A Vacuum in the Left Wing"

Okay Gonensin wrote in mainstream Vatan (6/20): "Ankara political circles are busy speculating on possible scenarios in the event the AKP is closed. The aftermath of the court decision to close down the AKP will lead to a new party, either in the center or in the center-right. The AKP implemented a seemingly centrist policy when it came to power, but was unable to continue with it. Thus, a power vacuum emerged in the political right. However, realistically speaking, the power vacuum in the left wing is more of a reality than the right wing's power vacuum. The CHP has completely abandoned its socially democratic policies and even pursues a vision compatible with the radical right wing. The AKP's six years in office has demonstrated the consequences of a nonexistent political left. Thus, Turkish democracy will continue to stumble unless the vacuum in the left is filled. Nowadays there is an idea for forming an 'umbrella-style right-wing party' and the same need applies for the left wing as well."

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Erdogan Seeks Solutions to Prevent Tuzla Shipyards Deaths

All papers report Prime Minister held a summit meeting on Thursday between government officials and representatives of employers and workers at Istanbul's Tuzla shipyards over the work-related accidents that claimed 25 lives over the last six months. In "Erdogan pushes the button for emergency measures for preventing work accidents in Tuzla," Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak says Erdogan warned ship owners against neglecting work safety while aiming high profits. "I don't want more deaths in Tuzla," Erdogan said, warning he would "hurt" the shipyard owners unless they avoid new work-related deaths. Liberal Radikal reports a statement by the Prime Ministry said among the "emergency measures" to be taken would be training for all workers, moving part of Tuzla's capacity to the nearby Yalova district, and increasing the number of inspectors.

Ambassador Wilson at TABA Event

Mainstream Sabah reports that Turkish-American Businessmen Association (TABA) arranged a meeting in Ankara. The theme of the meeting was the importance of the Agriculture Sector in the US-Turkey Relations. Agriculture Minister Mehdi Eker, in his speech, highlighted the bitter fact that "the food products are produced for nourishment, but unfortunately have been used as gas for luxurious vehicles." Ambassador Wilson announced that the U.S. will give \$5 billion in international food aid during 2008-2009.

Party Closure will have Important Consequences

Mainstreams Milliyet and Sabah report that, during a press conference at the EU Leaders Summit in Brussels, EU Parliament President Hans-Gert Pottering and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso commented on the AKP closure case. Reportedly, Barroso said that the decision of the Constitutional Court on AKP will bring important consequences. Pottering said "If the AKP is closed, then, the negotiations with Turkey will stop."

Yeni Safak: 8 Reasons to Hate the U.S.

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak carries the headline, "8 Reasons to Hate the U.S.," and covers Human Rights Watch's report on the eight reasons why the U.S. image is so bad. Yeni Safak notes the reasons include, "the lack of international cooperation, ongoing policies in Iraq, reports of the use of torture, a lack of impartiality in the Middle East, a perception America is hypocritical, unilateralism, the perception the U.S. denies visas to Muslims, and perceptions that the fight against terror is a fight against Islam."

MFA Bureaucrat to Manage TRT's Kurdish Channel

Mainstream Hurriyet reports Sinan Ilhan, a Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) bureaucrat, has been tasked with coordinating Kurdish-language broadcasts on the state-owned TRT television. Ilhan, who has carried out critical intelligence work at Turkish missions abroad, speaks Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi, English and Hebrew. He was recently at the intelligence desk of Turkey's special Iraq envoy. Ilhan is in contact with prominent Kurdish intellectuals, politicians and bureaucrats to gather a team for the new channel. Hurriyet says the Kurdish channel will initially broadcast for 10 hours a day. It will broadcast programs in the Kurdish dialects Kurmanci and Zaza as well as Arabic and Farsi.

TV Highlights

NTV

Domestic News

- Turkey's National Security Council (MGK) is to meet on June 26.
- Three children from Diyarbakir Municipality chorus have been acquitted in a court case for spreading PKK propaganda with a Kurdish song they performed at a music festival in San Fransisco.
- This year the Turkish entertainment and media sector is expected

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to grow by 16 percent.

International News

- The New York Times reports four Western oil companies are close to signing oil contracts with the Iraqi government for the first time in 36 years.
- Secretary Rice and Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said they were optimistic Iraqi and US negotiators will meet a July 31 deadline for a deal governing the future deployment of US troops.
- Greek Cypriot leader Demetrios Christofias says they will not object to a proposal for adding the Turkish language to the list of official EU languages.

WILSON